

VZCZCXRO7940
RR RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNT #0158/01 0420421
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 110426Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0429
INFO ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
CIS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 000158

SIPDIS SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
SBU DELIBERATIVE PROCESS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PASS TO AMCONSUL HYDERABAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-02-10
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KIRF](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [KPAO](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: TASHKENT TIDBITS FEBRUARY 10, 2008

REF: a) REF: A. 08 TASHKENT 49

CLASSIFIED BY: Nicholas Berliner, Pol Econ Chief; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

COST OF LIVING GROWS MORE SLOWLY IN 2008

11. (SBU) Post has updated its cost of living analysis for Uzbekistan through the end of 2008. At 21.6 percent, the cost of living grew more slowly in 2008 than in 2007, when it increased by 29.2 percent. The cost of foodstuffs increased by only 17.0 percent as contrasted with a 29.1 percent rise in 2007. Post's full 2003-2008 cost of living analysis is available in spreadsheet form upon request to McCutcheonRA@state.gov.

LOTS OF LEGROOM

12. (U) It may be off-season for tourism, but it seems that passenger loads on long distance flights are down considerably. Last week poloff flew from London to Tashkent on a brand new Uzbek Airways Boeing 757 aircraft with fewer than 30 seats filled. Several other embosffs reported similar or even smaller loads on the same route over the past two months. Travelers are reporting similar experiences on other busy routes, including to the busy Frankfurt hub. This could be an indication that the global economic crisis may take a bite out of Uzbekistan's fragile tourism market, and in the meantime the government is probably taking a big loss subsidizing Uzbekistan Airways.

ANDIJON AUTHORITIES REFUSE REGISTRATION FOR EZGULIK BRANCH

3.(U) According to Andijon-based human rights activist Saidjahon Zaynabiddinov, local authorities rejected his application to register a branch of the independent Ezgulik human rights group in Andijon in a letter dated January 26 (Note: Ezgulik is registered at the national level, but its regional branches are still required to register at the local level. Some, but not all, of Ezgulik's branches are registered. There are currently no locally registered independent human rights groups in Andijon. End note.) Andijon authorities reportedly stated that a lease Zaynabiddinov signed with a private firm for office space was null and void because Ezgulik was not a registered legal entity in Andijon and therefore could not conclude such a contract (Note: Organizations are required to have a legal address before they can become registered. Zaynabiddinov rented office space to acquire a legal address. End note.) As Zaynabiddinov noted, Ezgulik is caught in a Catch-22: it cannot rent office space to acquire a legal address to become registered until it is already registered. He has requested clarification from Andijon authorities on this point.

ERKIN MUSAEV TOLD TO SHUT UP FAMILY MEMBERS

TASHKENT 00000158 002 OF 003

14. (C) On February 10, poloff met with the sister of political prisoner Erkin Musaev (ref A). During their last visit at the Bekobad prison at the end of January, Musaev told his sister that he was recently interrogated by two National Security Service (NSS)

officers, who made unspecified threats and tried to pressure him into telling his family to stop advocating with foreign governments and international organizations on his behalf. Despite the warning, the sister said the family would continue to seek international recognition of Musaev's plight, believing it offered Musaev a degree of protection (in particular, she noted that Musaev has not been physically abused in prison recently). In the past few months, the United States and the United Kingdom have raised Musaev's case with Uzbek authorities, while an unspecified United Nations employee reportedly attempted to intervene on Musaev's behalf with Uzbek Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Gulnora Karimova (President Karimov's eldest daughter). In each case, the attempts at intervention elicited a decidedly negative reaction from Uzbek authorities. It is clear that Musaev's case is even more sensitive to the Uzbeks than other political cases. We have made our point to the Uzbeks that we are continuing to follow Musaev's case closely and will continue to do so, but we believe that continuing to formally raise the case at this point would be counterproductive and may lead the government to retaliate against Musaev or his family. The sister also reported that Musaev was still suffering from a persistent cough and that authorities were still making it difficult to deliver medicine to him. The sister did not believe that Musaev had contracted tuberculosis, but did not completely rule it out either.

HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES IN 2008

15. (U) Uzbekistan's Human Rights Ombudsman Sayyora Rashidova recently reported to Parliament on the activities of her office in 2008. During the past year, her office received 9,962 appeals for assistance, an increase from roughly 8,000 appeals in 2007. 5,383 of those appeals were heard by the regional branches of the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsmen acted on 1,891 appeals and sent 2,289 opinions and requests for information to 205 different government bodies and agencies. According to the Ombudsman, a majority of those appeals were successfully resolved. In 2008, the Ombudsmen of Spain, Hungary, and France visited Uzbekistan, the latter of whom signed an agreement of cooperation with the Uzbek Ombudsman. In addition, the Uzbek Ombudsman visited Bulgaria and signed an agreement of cooperation with the Bulgarian Ombudsman.

ISLAM IN AMERICA VIDEO SHOWN AT FAMOUS MADDRASSAH

16. (SBU) Since showing a PBS documentary on the lives of Muslims in America (entitled "Legacy of a Prophet") at the Embassy during

TASHKENT 00000158 003 OF 003

Ramadan for selected religious leaders, government officials, and other contacts, Embosffs have continued to distribute copies of the documentary to contacts in different regions of the country. One of the contacts, an Imam from Bukhara, showed the documentary to his students at the Mir-i Arab Maddrassah, the oldest and most famous maddrassah in Uzbekistan. During the Soviet era, it was the only officially functioning maddrassh in the entire Soviet Union and trained many of Central Asia's current religious leaders.
NORLAND

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS/SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:c0b8642a-48a3-4116-a5